Rationale and Objectives: To suggest a methodical approach for refining transitional management abilities, including empowerment of a growing leader, leading in an unfamiliar organization or leading in an organization that is changing.

Materials and Methods: Management approaches based on the body of work dealing with leadership studies and transitions and dealing with leadership during times of transition and change management were consolidated and categorized.

Results: Transitional leaders can benefit from effective leadership training including defining and prospectively accruing necessary experiences and skills; strengthening information gathering skills; effectively self-assessing; valuing and implementing mentoring; formulating strategy; and communicating.

Conclusions: A categorical approach to transitional leadership may be implemented through a systems-based and methodical approach to gaining the definable, and distinct sets of skills and abilities necessary for transitional leadership success.

Key Words: Leadership; change; transition; management.

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INTRODUCTION

Section chiefs and department chairs are often recruited for leadership positions as external candidates. These leaders try to adapt to increased responsibility while trying to understand an unfamiliar organization. Established leaders may also find their own familiar organization changing, either intentionally or unintentionally. These all can be considered examples of transitional leadership.

Section chiefs, such as a neuroradiology section chief, may step into a position requiring strategic direction setting, service schedule formulation and maintenance, professional development of their sectional faculty, and interfacing with non-neuroradiologists where policy and process are concerned. Department chairs will often be responsible for the same responsibilities on an expanded departmental rather than sectional scale, in addition to having greater budgetary and financial responsibilities. New section heads may be challenged by the increased responsibility they face where scheduling and the professional development of others are concerned, typically not having had to bear such responsibilities. In such cases, new section heads may need to learn about new domains of knowledge such as mentoring systems and approaches. New department chairs similarly need to learn about a new and expanded domain of financial management, in addition to assuming responsibility for strategy setting in areas that they may be unfamiliar with. A department chair who is a neuroradiologist still assumes responsibility for the institutional strategy where musculoskeletal imaging is concerned, necessitating effective and expanded delegation. Delegation itself is an essential task for leaders who may have received little formal attention in new leaders’ preceding posts.

Promotions in the case of both section chiefs and department chairs can happen internally or externally. An individual promoted internally may be seen as being given systemic endorsement for an existing strategy and culture, whereas new imported leaders may believe they carry a more substantial change mandate. Similarly, an internal promotion may be seen as undervalued and therefore securing a lesser recruitment package. Presumably, an outsider in most instances necessitates a higher minimum activation energy than an insider to motivate the outside candidate’s move to a new institution and possibly a new geographic location. To an even greater degree, a temporary or ad interim position is considered limited in negotiating ability, because the negotiation position is even weaker than a permanent internal candidate.
Whether leaders or their organizations are in transition, certain principles and considerations are supported by the leadership body of knowledge. These considerations include introspection and thought, information gathering and analysis, and an understanding of group psychology and effective communication and engagement (1–7). These tasks and approaches can be integrated into a series of actions timed far in advance of seeking a leadership role, during the assessment phase, soon after assuming a new role, and for long-term security in a new leadership role (Table 1).

Introspection is needed when self-assessing one’s skills and disposition. Information gathering and analysis is needed when learning about leadership, when performing a reconnaissance of the environment, and when securing the right human resources. An understanding of group psychology and effective communication and engagement is necessary when correctly positioning oneself as a leader between upper management and one’s charges, when setting clear priorities, and when focusing on the professional fulfillment of one’s charges.

In this report, “led entity” is intended to refer to the part of an organization that is led by the transitioning leader, and “housing organization” refers to the larger organization in which the led entity is contained. As an example and from the perspective of a transitional leader who is a radiology department chair, the led entity is the radiology department, and the housing organization is the larger academic medical center. For an interventional radiology chief, the led entity is the interventional radiology section, and the immediate housing organization is the radiology department. The led entity and housing organization do not always have the same hopes and expectations for the transitional leader.

Arguably, the degree of difficulty in managing the tripartite academic radiology units and departments has increased with the passage of time. As financial margins in academic radiology departments have diminished, the cross-funding opportunities for education and unreimbursed research have been threatened (8). The unique value of academic radiology departments is best demonstrated where translational research is concerned, specifically referring to the early and facilitated adoption of research initiatives directly into patient care.

At the same time as translational research is optimized and facilitated, academic systems are finding the need to explore and succeed at adaptive models including partnerships, expanded relationships, mergers, and acquisitions. Much of the present work involves system combinations where academic medical centers are integrated with or asked to work alongside community hospitals. Integrating such different cultures and businesses is neither natural nor straightforward.

Community hospitals do not focus on translational research and do not have a history of recognizing and valuing the research mission. As such, because the added cost and inefficiency of discovery and education are not universally appreciated, the community-based partners cannot readily recognize or assess the essential nature of translational research. To succeed in this space, academic medical centers will need to more transparently demonstrate the value of discovery and translation where clinical care and population health are concerned, and to communicate it with their new nonacademic partners.

### INTROSPECTION AND THOUGHT

#### Appropriate Self-assessment

Honest introspection is necessary when assessing essential skills and disposition and one’s own suitability for a job. Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When to Act</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
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| **Before seeking a leadership role** | Secure leadership training.  
Gain essential skills and experiences to be competitive.  
Assess your own abilities to lead.  
Assemble a panel of mentors. |
| **While assessing a leadership opportunity** | Perform an organizational reconnaissance.  
Assess the organization’s STARS* state and leadership need.  
Identify whether you possess the essential skills and disposition to succeed. |
| **Soon after assuming a new leadership role** | Build your own leadership team.  
Connect with line managers to establish control.  
Define a strategic intent.  
Establish major priorities and goals. |
| **For long-term security in a new leadership role** | Establish mentoring systems for the employees.  
Assure the quality and success of your line managers.  
Ensure professional development of employees as a top priority. |

The table includes individual considerations for a transitional leader, in each of four time spans. One set of considerations is appropriate before seeking a leadership role. A second set is intended for consideration as a leadership opportunity is being assessed. A third set is intended for implementation soon after assuming a new leadership role, and a fourth and final set of tasks is suggested for long-term security.

* Start-up, turnaround, accelerated growth, realignment, sustained success (Watkins (4)).
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